

**Minutes of First Meeting
Plum Brook Reactor Decommissioning
Community Workgroup
Firelands College
November 3, 1999**

The meeting began at 5 PM. Present were Workgroup members John Blakeman, Janet Bohne, Mark Bohne, Fred Deering, Richard Ennis, Jonathan Granville, Robert Speers and Bill Walker. Also present were Tim Polich, Decommissioning Project Manager, Bill Wessel, Director of Safety and Assurance Technologies, Sally Harrington, Public Affairs Specialist, Keith Peacock and Larry Schroeder of NASA, Marvin Mendonca of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Bob Hysong of Argonne National Laboratories and Susan Santos and Michael Morgan of FOCUS GROUP.

Tim Polich opened the meeting by thanking people for their willingness to volunteer and be a Workgroup member. He then introduced NASA, NRC and FOCUS GROUP personnel and turned the meeting over to Bill Wessel. Bill also extended his thanks and appreciation and noted that NASA is an "open organization" and that "an open organization requires communication". NASA sees the Workgroup as "a conduit with the public," to enhance the "two-way flow of communication." He commented on safety being NASA's number one concern, adding that NASA took the safest/most conservative approach to decommissioning, and will continue to do so.

Bill Wessel pointed that there comes a time in the life cycle of a facility, when a decision must be made to "decommission or dismantle it," and said NASA had asked of itself what state it wanted to leave the site in after decommissioning, and decided to completely remove the radiation from the facility. Then, he said, the decision was also made to eventually demolish the facility after decommissioning. If, after demolition, testing shows that the site is free of radioactivity, "we'll use the (debris) as fill"; and if testing shows radioactivity to be present, "we'll ship it to an approved disposal facility." He emphasized the timeframe for decommissioning process and said the eventual goal was to leave the site's radiation levels "the same as any other land in Northwest Ohio." NASA wants "to be a good steward".

Bill then introduced Sally Harrington, who welcomed the group. She mentioned having met many of the members during the (Community Relations Plan) interview process earlier this year, and seeing some of them at the Open House. Sally thanked those who had participated at the Open House, told them NASA is looking forward to sharing information about the decommissioning plan and process as they progress, and that we are interested in questions, comments and feedback from the group. She also mentioned the Community Information Session following the Workgroup meeting and invited people to stay.

The attendees then introduced themselves. Each one commented positively on their participation in the Workgroup and many also had positive comments on the Open House. Dr. Robert Speers mentioned that he got a lot of good feedback regarding the Open House as did Mark Bohne, who also said there had been a perception among some

community members that Plum Brook was closing - but now they realize that we are only decommissioning the reactor. He said that "3 or 4 times" he had found himself dispelling the rumor of Plum Brook's closing.

Perkins Fire Chief Richard Ennis, who has been in the community only three years, described his initial surprise by the community's perception of NASA as "the other side of the fence." He felt that the Open House gave many of the newer members of the community like himself an opportunity to find out what was done within the fences of Plum Brook. He said there had been more contact between his fire department and Plum Brook in the last year. And he thinks NASA is "on the right track" in terms of sharing decommissioning information.

Tim, NASA's Decommissioning Project Manager, who has experience at the NRC, then discussed his nuclear background and made several points regarding decommissioning: that this was a good point in time to decommission the reactor facility and that NASA picked the safest and most thorough alternative. He noted that NASA takes seriously "our responsibility to be a good neighbor" and that we take community suggestions seriously as was evidenced by having the recent Open House. His goal is to "communicate, communicate, communicate". He also pointed out that we want to keep an open line of communication with the Workgroup, and expect that the members will be able to take the information we give them back to other members of the community. Tim emphasized the need for feedback from Workgroup members and also noted that the Workgroup wasn't a replacement for working directly with officials like emergency responders. Tim noted that NASA wants feedback from the community so we can weigh that in as we make decisions.

Susan Santos (FOCUS GROUP) went over the structure for the Workgroup. She reiterated the group would be informal and at the time, did not think formal groundrules or meeting procedures were needed, other than common courtesy. She will facilitate the group's meetings as needed. Janet requested one "rule" - that the group dress informally (or come however they are from work). Susan reviewed the purpose and objectives of the Community Workgroup stressing that it was important that everyone understand and agree. The purpose of the Workgroup is to: (1) provide information, (2) get feedback/input, (3) hear community questions and concerns, and (4) to act as a vehicle for disseminating information to the broader community. The members of the Workgroup agreed that this was the purpose.

Susan said that Workgroup Meetings would be will be open to the general community and announced to the public in advance, via advertisements and Public Notices in local newspapers and Public Service Announcements on area radio stations. Group members, indicating their support for publicizing the meetings and Decommissioning, felt the meetings should not be publicized more than three days in advance.

Marvin Mendonca (NRC) said that one of his tasks for the NRC was to make sure there was a formal process to solicit public input. Susan said there would be a "Community Information Bank" at Firelands College where a copy of the Decommissioning Plan, the

Community Relations Plan, fact sheets, monitoring information, and more would be available to the public. Janet Bohne said that since Firelands College was the site of the information repository bank for the COE work being done at Plum Brook, it would be good to have decommissioning information there as well. She remarked, "It would be one-stop shopping for the community for information about work being done at Plum Brook."

Discussion turned to making decommissioning information available on the Internet. Suggestions were made by the group to check for a link to the county Web site and a link to the RAB Web site. Group members also talked more about community perceptions. Mark suggested that, the next edition of Aerospace Frontiers should emphasize the fact that decommissioning is only one aspect of Plum Brook Station. He also recommended that NASA e-mail its Open House newsletter article to the Sandusky Register. While NASA stressed the atmosphere of openness that made the Open House successful, John Blakeman felt NASA had made one mistake regarding the latter: not letting the public know that it was permissible to take pictures. Several other people also weighed in with suggestions regarding the need to continue to get the word out to the public.

Next, Tim gave an overview of the decommissioning process, mentioning that NASA will submit the decommissioning plan to the NRC by the end of 1999, and they will review it over the next 12-18 months. NASA will be going to Congress for money to fund the project in fall of 2001, and we will complete the project by 2007. He emphasized that NASA is going to "take the safest alternative...do things safely rather than quickly." He went over the recommended alternative, noting that everything within the 27 acres of the Reactor Facility will be leveled to three feet below grade, making the site safe enough to be used for any purpose. He stressed NASA's intent to keep the area as part of the existing "buffers" at PBS.

Marvin passed out a booklet entitled "Staff Responses to Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Reactors." Since the reactor facility at Plum Brook was a research reactor—not a power reactor—and was much smaller than most power reactors, he pointed out that some of the information in the booklet may not apply, and that the difference between most power reactors and the reactors at Plum Brook was about 1:50. He also mentioned that there are no public meeting requirements for research reactors (although the NRC seeks public comments) and confirmed that NRC must approve NASA's decommissioning plan.

Marvin distributed additional information, including regulations applicable to non-power reactors, and a list of the 70 research reactors that have been decommissioned. He urged the group to check the NRC Web site for information as well as contact him (through Tim) for any questions they may have.

Mark Bohne suggested that Workgroup Meeting minutes and agendas be e-mailed (all but three of those present preferred e-mail). Susan recorded the names of those who prefer hard copies instead. Bill Walker indicated faxing his copy would be fine but he,

Fred Deering and Richard Ennis all preferred to have the minutes sent to them by regular mail.

The Workgroup then proceeded to the display boards used by NASA at the Open House and to be used for the Community Information Session following the Workgroup Meeting. The following are questions/answers/comments made regarding the display information.

Decommissioning Board: Bill Wessel reiterated the alternative picked and that safety is the number one focus.

Radioactivity Board: Bob Hysong (Argonne) talked about radiation and radioactivity being around since the beginning of time. He explained the three types. He also talked about the percentages of radiation from radon, in the human body, from X-rays, in rock and soil, in consumer products and cosmic radiation from the sun. He told the Workgroup that we will leave the area same as Background levels.

John Blakeman asked how much radiation would be stirred up during the decommissioning and how much would travel to the community (through the air, etc.). Bob said nearly none.

Janet Bohne asked if people at PBS—the employees and other people who work at Plum Brook (not the decommissioning workers)—would have to wear personal badges to monitor radiation. Bob said no, NASA would be monitoring the facility.

Richard Ennis asked about half life and research reactors and the resulting discussion indicated that the radiation levels were “not a big deal.” Marvin Mendonca said the Decommissioning is “not rocket science” and that “it has been done many times before.”

Bill Walker asked if there were any reading above Background presently in the reactor facility. He was told (by Tim) that readings inside the containment vessel and in the “hot” storage area, that were possibly two or three times above Background; and in some cut ditches, the readings may be higher than Background - depending on the shale in the area. He also said NASA will come up with an average Background reading for the area.

Monitoring Board: It was pointed out that NASA is interested in protecting the workers and the public; and that, since 1973, the Reactor Facility has been monitored and maintained regularly—including soil, silt, water, groundwater, and air samples—and that NASA will continue to do monitoring throughout the decommissioning process. It was mentioned that prior to closing the Reactor Facility, monitoring had been done throughout the community—at the old Post Office Building, for instance, also the produce of nearby farmers—and no radiation had been detected. The Workgroup was also told that after the cleanup, NASA will do a characterization and prove to the NRC that it is clean and that they (NRC) will check it themselves before they terminate the license.

Transportation Board: Workgroup members were told that NASA would work with the local community - through the Workgroup and with the local responders - to come up with the best time and route to take. Transporting Low Level Radioactive Waste (LLRW) will be done safely and intelligently.

NASA also reiterated that all fuel was safely disposed of in 1973; that now only LLRW remains and that it is less complicated to clean up. An explanation was made of the containers that will be used to transport the material. An estimate of 99 truckloads (over a two-year period) was made, which translates into approximately one truck per week to transport waste - not a "convoy of trucks" at one time. Workgroup members were told that material would be shipped to the following licensed facilities: Envirocare in Utah and Barnwell in South Carolina.

After viewing the display boards, Susan asked the Workgroup for names of anyone else they thought should be included in the group. John Blakeman mentioned a high school student who was very interested in being included. Susan also mentioned that we were interested in having diversity among the Workgroup members.

Susan also brought up the subject of future meetings. The members agreed that Tuesdays were the best night of the week, during the hours of 7-9 p.m. **The next meeting will be on Tuesday December 7, starting at 7 PM.** Mark Bohne will look into another spot at Firelands rather than the busy student lounge for further meetings. During 2000, there will be quarterly meetings.

The agenda for the next meeting will include acquainting the membership with the Community Relations Plan and Decommissioning Plan. Bill Wessel mentioned that he and Tim will be making a presentation to the Director and upper management of the NASA Glenn Research Center and will give a similar presentation to the Workgroup at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM, when group members were joined at the displays by early attendees of the Community Information Session.

Community Workgroup
Meeting #1 Minutes
November 3, 1999